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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews a panel presentation on the essential components, policies, and strategies of a system for effectively moving emotionally disturbed (ED) students into least restrictive educational environments and maintaining them there. The first two parts of the session focused on a system for partially mainstreaming center school (seventh and eighth grade) ED students part time into nearby schools before returning full time to regular classes in home based schools that are distant from the center. Center school and transition school operations, as well as interschool coordination were addressed in these parts of the session. The third part of the session was a report of a regular class support system for meeting the needs of ED students in regular classes. Guidelines for interschool coordination are offered, and both direct and indirect support services for ED children in regular classrooms are outlined. Among appended materials are a schedule for mainstreaming, a class observation sheet, a mainstreaming contract form, a teacher checklist, and a mainstreaming evaluation form. (SBH)

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TRANSITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED (ED) STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT:

Home schools are often too distant from center schools to support a gradual mainstreaming program for ED students. Transportation costs may be prohibitive, and center school support to regular class teachers is relatively unavailable. A regular school that is close to the center can be an effective way station to the home school. Strategies for successfully phasing center students into transition schools on a part-time basis and, finally, back into home schools full-time were the major topics of this presentation at the 58th Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. Support services, strategies and policies needed by educators in these situations were explored in detail and recorded in this text.

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TRANSITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED (ED) STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

All of the Models for Mainstreaming cited by Beery (1972), and Instructional Alternatives for Exceptional Children described by Deno (1971), indicate resource system requirements for providing least restrictive educational environments for exceptional children. Personnel, material, administrative and logistical needs of school programs for these students are apparently numerous, varied, and somewhat controversial. There is unanimous agreement among the authorities that the task cannot be accomplished without a well-planned program and sufficient resources. Behaviorally Disordered or Emotionally Disturbed (ED) students have some of the most obvious educational program needs for least restrictive placements.

This paper describes the content of a panel presentation at the 58th Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children. The main purpose of the session was to present essential components, policies and strategies of a system for effectively moving ED students into least restrictive educational environments and maintaining them there. The first two parts of the session were about a system for partially mainstreaming center school ED students part-time in nearby schools before returning full-time to regular classes in home-base schools that are distant from the center. Center school and transition school operations, as well as interschool coordination were addressed in these parts of the session. The other part of the session was a report of a regular class support system for meeting the needs of ED students in regular classes.

PREPARATION OF CENTER STUDENTS FOR REGULAR CLASS PLACEMENTS

The Center School

The Dunn Loring Center for Seriously Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents was established in August, 1976. It was the only school for ED children in grades 7-8 for one of the largest school systems in the United States, both numerically and geographically. Because of this, many ED students were bussed long distances from their bomes to school. By the time the center moved to its present location in 1978, several students were ready to return to regular classes on a part-time basis. However, it was not possible to transport an individual student up to 20 miles for one or two hours of classes. Further, sending students back to regular classes full-time, or part-time without support services would have condemned them to failure. Thus, it became apparent that a system was needed that would involve nearby schools for part-time mainstreaming, with center support to those schools. The original goals of the system were to prepare center ED students for the transitions, and prepare schools to accept them. A transition class at the center, and the transition teacher, became the hub of these mainstreaming efforts.

When the Transition Class began in August, 1978, numerous problems had to be overcome. Eight students were selected for the class and several of these students were not ready for the placement. They were misplaced because of a lack of adequate criteria. Another problem was the inability to secure a regular school to receive transition students. Students in the class felt they had been misinformed about possibilities for mainstreaming. A transition team was established to develop criteria and facilitate mainstream efforts. The team was chaired by the transition class teacher and consisted of all support staff involved with the child. Team activities included setting up a progression to ease students gradually and predictably back into regular classes. It was decided to have the students demonstrate readiness for a less restrictive placement by earning it. After an extended period of negotiations, regular classes became available to transition class students in November, 1978. Thus, this class became a much needed incentive for the school, as a sign of progress and a channel back into regular classes.

The road to progress in this mainstreaming system begins in one of three self-contained classes in the Center. Students in these classes earn their way into the transition class by modifying behavior problems, which range from very aggressive and acting-out behaviors to passive aggressive, withdrawn behaviors. They also need to demonstrate academic readiness to work in a regular class setting. When the classroom teacher and child's parents feel he is ready for the transition class, he is placed on a transition contract for 2-3 weeks. The contract can also be extended as needed. Sometimes the students sabotage the contract by regressing their behaviors. Apparently they are anxious about returning to regular classes, remembering the failures they encountered there. They discuss their progress, concerns and questions with the Transition Teacher. These sessions provide students the opportunity to learn more about the class and become more motivated to enter it. Upon successful completion of his contract, the student becomes a member of the transition class.

The Transition Class

Transition class activities involve all center staff with the students. In addition to the teacher and teacher's aide, crisis-teachers, a physical education teacher, a psychiatric social worker, a vocational education teacher, an art therapist, a music therapist and a psychologist are available to support student growth in the transition class. The goal of students in the class is to earn part-time regular class placement in a nearby school and then full-time placement in their home schools. Nearby transition schools are Thoreau Intermediate for seventh and eighth graders and Marshall High School for ninth graders. These schools were chosen according to the following criteria:

Choosing the Mainstreaming School:

1. School should be located near the center.
2. Appropriate role models must be available.
3. Structural capabilities and facilities must be suitable for mainstreaming.
4. Transportation must be available.
5. Attitude of staff should be positive.
6. Mainstreaming school should be nofified by School Superintendent.

Curriculum and materials from these schools are used in the transition class. More group work is emphasized in the class, although individualized instruction continues. A token system is used for behavior management. Up to ten points per period can be earned for appropriate academic and social behavior. Washington, D.C., area field trips have been consistently effective back-up reinforcers. Field trips also give students experience in behaving appropriately in a variety of situations. The class helps establish consequences for inappropriate behavior, such as minutes after school for verbal aggression, in-school suspension (supervised work in an empty classroom), or loss of game room.

As transition class students progress toward individual goals they discuss their behaviors and problems in daily class meetings. Initial reticence about sensitive issues is handled by event planning until students are ready to discuss personal matters. During these meetings, transition students who are already in regular classes report on observations, satisfactions, problems and fears. They also help the rest of the group determine who is ready for a regular class.

When the transition team and parents agree that a student is ready for regular classes, he begins a mainstream contract for a two-week period. Because the first class placement is crucial to insure success, care is taken in making this decision. An observation sheet is used to select regular class teachers whose instructional techniques, responsiveness to student needs, and behavior modeling are appropriate for the child. As the child proceeds with his contract, he is paced through lessons with a regular class that he will re-enter. While schedules are arranged, the student visits the transition school to become familiar and comfortable with the setting. These visits are informative and motivational to the students, who observe and talk with teachers and administrators. Sometimes, irrational ideas come out during these trips ("That boy looked right at me, and would have stabbed me if you hadn't been here."). Such concerns are dealt with at the time and are good topics for the next day's class discussion.

After completion of their mainstream contracts, transition class members are bussed to two (usually) regular classes each day, including one academic class. Social Studies has been a successful experience for most transition students because the content for each nine-week period allows each child in the class to begin at the same place. When the program began, only students

with the greatest potential for success were placed in regular classes so that teachers would be willing to accept ED students. The transition teacher spends two afternoons per week assisting regular classroom teachers and determining what support should be given the ED students back in the center school. Academic tutoring is necessary in most cases. The results have been better than expected. Apprehensive teachers have become enthusiastic because the ED students behave very well in regular classes, reserving acting-out behavior for the center transition class. As the students adjust to regular classes, the number of classes increases until they are ready for full-time regular classes and can return to their home-base schools. In the first year of the program, seven of ten transition students were in regular classes in transition schools, and four of them returned full-time to home-base schools.

INTERSCHOOL COORDINATION FOR CENTER TO HOME SCHOOL TRANSITIONS

The Transition School

When students complete the mainstreaming contract, they enter regular classes in a school like Thoreau Intermediate. Thoreau Intermediate School in Vienna, Virginia, is part of a school system with over 100,000 students. The Fairfax County School System has about 120 elementary schools, 18 intermediate schools (Grades 7-8), 18 high schools (Grades 9-12) and 18 secondary schools (Grades 7-12). Five elementary schools feed Thoreau Intermediate. Thoreau serves 682 seventh and eighth graders. Of these students, 92% have IQs above 108, and 120 of them are in the gifted program. Low track (below fifth grade) programs include 18 eighth graders and less than 30 seventh graders. A Learning Disabilities Resource class enrolls 48 students for one hour each. The instruction is traditional, with no team teaching or open classes. The school has a very stable staff with "good administrative support." There have been no suspensions in two years, and no major problems, according to the assistant principal.

When Thoreau was chosen as the first transition school for the Dunn Loring ED Center, the staff thought they were going to inherit many problems. They were apprehensive about having "Seriously Emotionally Disturbed" children entering their "problem-free" school. Previous background of the Thoreau assistant principal with ED children had been unpleasant. They were "all discipline problems." Other staff were inexperienced with ED students and were not excited about the prospect of teaching them. Thus, when the Special Education Supervisor called the school in August, 1978, with the news that ED students were coming to regular classes, the staff reaction was to "forget about it." The center school principal and transition teacher began calling Thoreau in September, 1978, to no avail. Some Thoreau staff were delighed with their temporary success in delaying the transfers. For some time, Thoreau administrators avoided scheduling an appointment to discuss plans for the program. After considerable persistence by the transition teacher, the Thoreau principal arranged a meeting in November and turned the project over to the assistant principal.

Following the November meeting, arrangements were completed for center school students to enter the regular classes in the school. Each prospective student is interviewed by the the assistant principal and the transition teacher. The transition teacher is in the school every Tuesday and Thursday. She has become part of the faculty, assisting primarily with academic problems of the ED students and behavior problems of other students. Faculty fears were alleviated when they discovered that these children behave better than many "normal" children. In 1978-1979, transition students were placed in average academic classes, rather than low track, to provide the best peer behavior models. However, their weak academic skills were not adequately addressed in these classes. This year (1979-1980), some of them have been in low math classes. Now they do as well academically, at their levels, as they do behaviorally. Their center behavioral adjustment lags behind their regular class adjustment. Thus, it appears that they are only ready for gradually increasing doses of reality. It is also apparent that good behavior models and positive teacher attitudes at Thoreau facilitate increasing levels of academic and behavioral adjustment.

Guidelines

Some of the most important guidelines for this program are applicable to any mainstreaming efforts. At the outset, coordinators and administrators of participating schools should meet to establish foundations for a successful program. Among the goals of the initial phases would be the following:

1. Set up guidelines, responsibilities, needs, goals and objectives for the coming year.
2. Share information concerning both school programs.
3. Set up a positive tone.
4. Don't have a big thing flop - let a small thing grow.

One liaison person from each school should be designated to keep the system running smoothly. A mainstream coordinator in the regular school and a transition teacher from the center school have major responsibilities. The greatest challenges for both roles are preparing staff and students for the change and supporting them through the transition process. Specific guidelines for these roles follow.

The mainstreaming coordinator at the regular school should be responsible for at least these activities:

1. Interview each ED student as he begins the process of preparing for mainstreaming.
2. Arrange for appropriate class placement.
3. Assess staff attitudes toward having ED students in class.
   a. Don't force ED students on teachers.
   b. Work slowly with negative staff persons.
   c. Involve as many people as possible.
4. Be sure that every administrator knows the handicapped students.
5. Treat the ED students just the same as other students - but be aware of their differeces.
6. Work closely with the transition teacher from the ED center.

7. Meet the parents of ED mainstream students either at group meetings or on an individual basis.

The transition teacher from the center school should be responsible for the following activities:

1. Assess, along with team members, readiness of ED student for partial mainstreaming experience (See Attachment #1.).
2. Establish rapport with mainstreaming teachers and administrators.
3. Initially meet with each teacher who will be working with ED students, and describe the mainstreaming program and present data on the student.
4. Observe teacher, noting style, class atmosphere, etc. (See Attachment #2.).
5. Monitor student progress at the center school to determine readiness (See Attachment #3.).
6. Meet regularly with the teacher to receive feedback on student progress (See Attachment #4.).
7. Support student with counseling and individual tutoring at the center school but not at the mainstream school.
8. Meet with the mainstream coordinator at least twice weekly to discuss progress of students and plans for new students.
9. Keep both school staffs informed.
10. Provide inservice program for mainstream school personnel
11. Provide for academic continuity.
12. Assist the mainstream coordinator in evaluation (See Attachment #5.).

These guidelines would not be complete without reference to the personal characteristics of the people in the roles. Dedication, enthusiasm, and good relationships with other staff and children are essential to these roles, and apparent in the cited programs. In these programs students have been integrated into regular classes without disrupting normal routines. This has been done in a manner which has permitted the students to develop self-confidence and a positive self-image.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR EMOTIONALLY EISTURBED CHILDREN IN REGULAR CLASSROOMS

Support of regular class teachers includes a number of direct and indirect services that are essential to the maintenance of ED students in regular classes prior to referral or after re-integration. A program in Fayette County, Kentucky, is illustrative of these support services. The basic assumption underlying the program is that mainstreaming ED children will be unsuccessful unless there is a support system available to these children, and more importantly, to their regular classroom teachers. This support system must be available on a continuing basis, until the ED child has demonstrated his ability to function over time, within the expectations of this setting.

Many regular class teachers feel less comfortable with ED children than with other handicapped children. They typically lack both the confidence and some of the skills to deal with the behaviors these children may display. Typical inservice training programs, whether a one day (or partial day) presentation or workshop, or a semester course, may provide some important background information but do not develop the complex skills necessary for daily application of this information.

A special educator operating in the role of inservice consultant (or Liaison Teacher) to one or two schools seems to be able to provide the job-embedded, continuing training and support services that are required. This consultant needs to spend some time in direct service to children, but experience in this role suggests that the bulk of the consultant's time is spent interacting with the classroom teacher and providing other indirect services. An exploration of the role of the inservice consultant addresses the direct and indirect services necessary for successful mainstreaming of ED children. These services are listed below.

Indirect Services

1. Contact teachers at least weekly to clarify current concerns, set priorities, and assist the teacher in taking a problem-solving approach to classroom behavior problems. The basic approach employs applied behavior analysis. Once a program is underway, the liaison teacher helps to work out the bugs, assist with data collections, and reinforce the classroom teacher for his/her efforts and successes.
2. Frequent observations of the child, both formal and informal, are are made. Informal observations provide an initial picture of the child in the regular classroom, and some quick impressions of change over time. Formal observation (e.g. percent of time-on-task) gives more specific data on child change. All observations tend to lead to hypotheses of what needs to be changed and ways to change that behavior. Generally, both large and small group instruction and independent work periods are observed, as well as free periods such as recess or lunch, to get as close to a total picture of the child's functioning as possible.
3. Ongoing evaluation of other forms than observation may also take place. The teacher may be assisted in doing a sociometric survey of the class (especially if a group intervention is planned) or in having a child fill out a questionnaire. The consultant may interview or otherwise obtain further data directly from the child.
4. Modeling of specific techniques, or demonstrations of the use of given materials may occur. Not only teachers, but aides, peers, and older students may be the target of this training.
5. Group sessions may be held for teachers with similar training needs. This format is similar to a more traditional inservice with one significant difference. There is opportunity for individual follow-up. This way, a general knowledge base can be taken those necessary next steps to specific applications.

6. Other meetings, with the school principal, with parents, and with other professionals are necessary to keep communication lines open and this system functioning smoothly.
7. Teachers may be provided with materials. Some will be for their professional development, e.g. a teacher may be given an article on contracting if he/she has expressed an interest in this area. Other materials will be those appropriate for use with the ED student. An example might be an activity card from a social curriculum program that relates to a recurring classroom problem (e.g. criticizing others).
8. Some of the consultant's time will of necessity by spent in planning and preparation, and in administrative activities. Written plans are a bonus in adding clarity and direction to the activities of all personnel involved with an ED mainstreamed student.

Direct Services

1. Back-up reinforcement from a consultant is a real boost to a classroom program. In most cases, signs of excitement and praise for a child's accomplishments is sufficient. Other times, a more special back-up, such as a desired activity, may be provided.
2. A consultant may need to be prepared to provide social skills training if it becomes apparent that the child is not succeeding with his classmates due to a deficit in this area. Training may begin with one other peer and extend to group training sessions. The child's peers may be enlisted as assistants in this undertaking.
3. A consultant may meet with a child on a regularly scheduled basis or as needed to get the child's feedback on his/her progress (and perhaps teach him to evaluate himself). Informal counseling may be appropriate (or referral to a school counselor). Contracting with the child may also occur during these sessions, especially with older children. This way, the children themselves are given more responsibility for their program.
4. Often, several objectives can be reached at once through direct contact with the ED child. The consultant can provide a reward for classroom behavior in the form of a desired activity, while at the same time building a trusting relationship with the child and establishing social reinforcement potential. Another child may be included in this reward, adding to the ED child's importance and allowing the possibility for social skills training and reinforcement of appropriate social interaction.

The number and type of services needed to support a mainstreamed ED child will vary across situations. These are some of the services found to be most useful with the mainstreamed ED children served by the Liaison Teacher.

REFERENCES

Beery, K. Models for Mainstreaming. Sioux Falls, S.D.: Adapt Press, 1972.

Deno, E.N. Instructional Alternatives for Exceptional Children. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, 1971.

Schedule for Mainstreaming--Transition Team to Regular School

1. Informal visit to regular school (library visit, school tour)

2. Transition group process..class assessment of readiness of candidate

3. Team assessment meeting

4. Self-assessment conference meeting with student--transition teacher, liaison teacher. Does he feel ready? What classes might he be interested in taking?

5. Parents called to advise about process beginning:
   a. Need for support from parent
   b. Expectation of difficulty during this time

6. Contact with receiving school by liaison teacher
   a. Student interview with guidance counselor
   b. Course selections made

7. Contract with student in transition team
   a. Time - two weeks
   b. Begin working in specific books from classes chosen
   c. Follows basic mainstreaming contract...monitoring own progress and checking with Transition Team to verify assessment.

8. Parent conference --(at beginning of 9 week period)
   a. Discuss anxiety student will have
   b. Have emergency care form signed
   c. Enlist help with homework, but encourage parents not to put too much pressure on student

9. Assessment of progress and readiness--need for more time.

10. Check transportation arrangements

11. Liaison consultation with teachers
   a. Set up time to observe class
   b. Set up regular time to meet with teacher
   c. Give teacher student's IEP and other helpful information

12. Student meets teachers, locates classrooms

Attachment #2

CLASS OBSERVATION SHEET

Teacher	SUBJECT	Period	Time

ACADEMIC ACTIVITY	TEACHER STYLE	STUDENT INTERACTIONS
	TEXTBOOKS USED	COMMENTS

11

13

14

Attachment #3

MAINSTREAMING CONTRACT

Name _____ Date _____

GOAL	G	Period 1	2	3	A	L	4	5	Average
1. To complete assignments daily demonstrating at least 80% accuracy.									
MATH									
LANGUAGE ARTS									
OTHER ACADEMIC, ELECTIVE COURSES									
2. To remain on task until completion									
3. To complete homework daily									
4. To respond appropriately to authority figures.									
5. To respect space and property of others									
6. To demonstrate appropriate reaction to anger and frustration.									
7. To be in the right place									
8. To follow directions without delay									
9. Additional goals:									

3 - Goal met most of the time

2 - Goal met some of the time

1 - Goal met rarely or never

Attachment #4

TEACHER CHECKLIST

Name of Teacher: _____ Class: _____

Name of Student: _____ Period: _____

Academic	Every Day	Some-times	Rarely
1. Student pays attention during class discussions			
2. Student seems to understand work			
3. Assignments in class are completed			
4. Homework assignments are completed			
Behavior			
1. Student relates positively with peers			
2. Student relates positively to authority figures			
3. Student demonstrates appropriate reaction (to anger and frustration).			

Comments

Remediation Requested

Conference Requested

Attachment #5

MAINSTREAMING EVAULATION

Teacher_____ Class_____

Student_____ Date _____

Academic Area	Every Day	Some-times	Rarely
1. Student pays attention during class discussions			
2. Student seems to understand work			
3. Assignments in class are completed			
4. Homework assignments are completed			
5. Student participates in class			
6. Student comes to class with books and materials			
7. Student asks appropriate questions when needs help			
8. Strengths _____			
_____			
9. Weaknesses_____			
_____			
Behavioral Area			
10. Student relates positively to peers			
11. Student relates positively to authority figures			
12. Student follows directions.....			
13. Student demonstrates appropriate reaction to anger and frustration.....			
14. Strengths _____			
_____			
15. Weaknesses_____			
_____			

16. Was the student academically prepared for your class when he entered?

_____

17. If not, what areas caused him the most difficulty?_____

_____

18. What is your assessment of the student's academic progress in your class?

_____

19. Was the student behaviorally prepared for your class when he entered? _____

20. If not, what areas caused him the most difficulty?_____

_____

21. What is your assessment of the student's behavioral progress in your class?

_____

22. Was the E. D. Center support sufficient to meet your needs and the student's needs in your classroom?_____ If not, what else was needed?_____

_____

_____

23. Based on your experience with the student do you feel that he will be able to successfully function in his base school full time next year?_____

_____

24. What was your reaction to being asked to have an E.D. student in your class?

_____

_____

25. What is your reaction to having had an E.D. student in your class?_____

_____

_____

26. What could be done to make the mainstreaming experience more successful?

_____

_____

_____

27. Comments? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____